

STANDING OUT

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates and Elected Officials Around the World

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THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL



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Foreword

We are deeply grateful to the academics, advocates, activists, and politicians who helped us conceptualize this research project, craft our questions, and gather data. This has been a truly collaborative project born of a desire to learn and provide a baseline “state-of-play” for trans* politics and to offer a benchmark for future scholars as the study of transgender politics and rights develops. Before we put pen to paper, a broad community helped us develop our research design and questions. These individuals are acknowledged at the end of the report, but we owe a particular debt of gratitude to Paisley Currah, Mara Kiesling, and Ken Sherrill, each of whom met with us and provided invaluable advice.

We focus on one aspect of transgender visibility and progress toward legal and social justice: electoral politics. Elections are just one piece of the puzzle of how change happens and how rights are advanced—but they are a crucial piece. The presence of transgender and gender variant people in public office does more than give the community an authentic voice in political decision-making. It incorporates trans* people

into established governance structures and offers role models to inspire future generations. It opens doors for further visibility and representation of transgender people, not just in the formal halls of government, but also in the daily lives and fabric of a society.

What is the evidence that descriptive representation—the presence of members of a particular community in political office—improves life for the represented community? Marginalized groups have long benefitted from descriptive representation. Growing numbers of women in office change the way we think about women and gender in politics, as well as what policies are supported or advanced by a legislative body (Wolbrecht & Campbell 2007; Karpowitz & Mendelberg 2014). Similarly, racial and ethnic minority legislators give a face and a voice to outsider and institutionally disadvantaged communities, often changing perceptions of the represented group in the process (Broockman 2013; Chauchard 2014). Indeed, such political visibility for gays and lesbians has been key to progress in gay rights

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1977 – 2015

126 INDIVIDUALS



FROM 30 COUNTRIES

RUNNING IN

209

RACES



✓✓✓ AND
BEING
ELECTED

72 TIMES

around the world—the gay experience, while far from identical, is a parallel experience and thus useful history for scholars and transgender activists alike.

When it comes to sexual orientation, it is no shock to learn that knowing someone who is gay can change the way people think about sexuality and gay rights. Indeed, the number of Americans who support same-sex marriage in the United States has tracked closely with the number of people who say they know a gay or lesbian person. While this phenomenon is clearly important, openly gay and lesbian elected officials have a surprisingly large effect on legislation and attitudes, above and beyond the influence of contact. Though the direct link between descriptive representation and policy change is often murky and tenuous, there is powerful evidence to show that openly gay representatives—members of parliament, senators, state legislators, mayors, and councillors—have a dramatic impact on the progress of gay rights in their countries, states, and towns (Haider-Markel 2010; Reynolds 2013). The connection between having even a single out gay representative and policy change—from Washington to London, Mexico City to Kathmandu—is clear. Of course, other things matter as well, including evolving social norms and values, democratizing trends, increasingly savvy and strategic advocates for change, and the rise of positive role models in the spaces

where we live. But in this mix, the payoff of a few nationally recognized political leaders, who happen to be gay and open about it, is crucial.

There is also evidence to suggest that the transformative effects of knowing a gay person apply within the world of media and fiction. As viewers become attached to gay characters on TV, their attitudes begin to change. In his 2012 book, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*, Jonathan Gottschall noted:

...When we are absorbed in fiction, we form judgments about the characters exactly as we do with real people, and extend those judgments to the generalizations we make about groups. When straight viewers watch likeable gay characters on shows like *Will and Grace*, *Modern Family*, *Glee*, and *Six Feet Under* they come to root for them, to empathize with them—and this seems to shape their attitudes toward homosexuality in the real world. Studies indicate that watching television with gay-friendly themes lessens viewer prejudice, with stronger effects for more prejudiced viewers.

In recent years, the visibility of transgender people in American television and media has grown noticeably. In the popular Netflix series *Orange Is the New Black*, Laverne Cox, a transgender woman of color herself, plays an incarcerated transwoman named Sophia Burset. In 2014, Cox also became the first transgender woman

featured on the cover of *Time Magazine*. Similarly, the Amazon show *Transparent* was widely lauded by critics and audiences for its portrayal of a transgender woman coming out to her adult children and transitioning later in life. The show won multiple Golden Globes and Emmys for its first season, including for best television series. Beyond fiction, Janet Mock, a transgender woman of color, is a writer, advocate, and social and media commentator. Her memoir *Redefining Realness* was a best seller in 2014, and she now hosts her own show on MSNBC. These are just some of the many and growing representations of trans* people in the media.

However, while representations of transgender people in the media are increasing, this report shows that transgender leaders remain effectively invisible in public office. This lack of visibility is consistent with other findings that show, for example, a small minority (9%) of Americans say they know someone who is transgender (Public Religion Research Institute 2014). Indeed, in 2011, the National Center for Transgender Equality found that 41% of trans* identifying Americans said they were not out—a finding that should not be surprising, given the staggering rates of violence and discrimination faced by trans* people the world over. Given the power of contact, even through media, this heightens the potential influence of having a transgender-identified elected representative, who can stand in a public spotlight and demonstrate and advocate for the

legitimacy, value, and dignity of trans* peoples' lives and political claims.

We are very aware that this initial data collection and analysis only represent the tip of an iceberg when it comes to understanding the lives and experiences of transgender people around the world. Politics is merely one sphere. Health, housing, legal, educational, prison, and policing systems structure the lives of transgender people in just as, if not more so, consequential ways. The minutiae of life are heightened as a trans* person: the smallest task, from filling out a form to going to the bathroom, becomes magnified and imbued with an excess of meaning, risk, and vulnerability. There is so much work to be done to better understand trans* people and trans* lives. Some of that work will be rooted in social science, and that is what we hope here to engender. At the simplest level, this paper responds to the need to lay down data markers and pose questions in a much-understudied field.

To date, there has been limited research into the electoral dimensions of transgender politics. Related work includes Jami Taylor and Donald Haider-Markel's co-edited volume, *Transgender Rights and Politics: Groups, Issue Framing and Policy Adoption* (2014), and *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves*, edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth (2014). A fuller list of work on transgender politics, both within and beyond the electoral context, is included at the end of this report.



Trans Solidarity Rally and March,
Washington, DC USA (2015)
Photo by Ted Eytan

GEORGINA BEYER

NEW ZEALAND



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Georgina Beyer was the first openly transgender candidate to hold national public office worldwide. First elected as Mayor of Carterton in 1995, Beyer who identifies as transsexual and straight, went on to serve as Labour MP from 1999–2007. She is also of indigenous Māori heritage.

Born in Wellington, Beyer describes suppressing gender bending behaviors as a child to avoid disapproval by her family and peers. At a time when laws criminalized homosexuality in New Zealand and sexuality was rarely discussed in the open, Beyer was first exposed to trans people through the news coverage of Christine Jorgensen and April Ashley—the first trans women to openly undergo sexual reassignment in the United States and Britain, respectively.

During school, Beyer became active in theater, feeling that the practice was a form of “escapism” and “a way of getting positive reinforcement” for performing as someone other than who she was expected to be. She left school to pursue acting in Auckland and then Wellington. It was during her time acting and working night jobs that Beyer met queens, trans performers, and sex workers and began to identify as Georgina. Beyer realized that the “street scene” was where people who did not uphold gender and sexuality norms could “fully participate in regular life.” Beyer began to perform in nightclubs and worked as a sex worker during her twenties.

In 1984, Beyer underwent sexual reassignment surgery and continued to pursue an acting career. By 1992, Beyer had moved to the small town of Carterton and became involved in local politics. After serving as a district councillor and mayor, Beyer was elected in 1999 to serve as Labour MP for Wairarapa and became the first trans person in the world to hold national office.

“...I am the first transsexual in New Zealand to be standing in this House of Parliament. This is a first not only in New Zealand, ladies and gentleman, but also in the world.... We have led the way in the past, and I hope we will do so again in the future in social policy and certainly in human rights.”

—Beyer’s Maiden Speech, 2000

Georgina Beyer served her constituency for three terms and was a member of the local government, social services, and law and order committees. Beyer was also an active member of Labour’s rainbow caucus. She fought for the passage of New Zealand’s 2005 Civil Union Bill, as well as legislation adding protections for transgender people and sex workers. Beyer decided not to run for a third term and gave her valedictory speech in 2007.

“For the gay community of New Zealand, and certainly for the transgender community of New Zealand, my election was an inspiration, but it followed in the path...of the election of Chris Carter...who was the first out gay member of Parliament, and also that of Tim Barnett.... It has to add to our country that significant minorities can have a voice, can have a say, and can stand for representation in this House.”

—Georgina Beyer, February 14, 2007

In 2014, Beyer made an unsuccessful run for the parliamentary Te Tai Tonga constituency under the banner of the Mana Party, a small Māori rights party. Beyer said that her decision to leave Labour and run under Mana was partly to make up for voting in 2004 to give ownership of a Māori-claimed seabed to the Crown.

Our work is not only inspired by the trailblazing scholars and activists mentioned above, but by the courage of the candidates and elected officials whom we illuminate. Few of the candidates listed at the end of the report were groomed for the political life by wealthy families or party elites. Many, if not all, had to fight reluctant gatekeepers and contemptuous social mores. Some survived violence and arrest before becoming candidates. Others were cast out from their families and homes and endured homelessness and health problems. Some died along the way. Almost all have come through enormous tests of their mental health as they wrestled with themselves and society’s expectations of who they should be. The names in this report are the first wave: those who put themselves on the front line to pave the way for future generations. We dedicate this report to them, and to the many trans* and gender variant people the world over who lost their lives to violence, discrimination, and transphobia.



Bemz Benedito is a founding member and chairperson for the Ang Ladlad Party, the first party in the world dedicated solely to advancing justice and human rights for LGBT members of society. (Colloquially, Ladlad means “coming out”.) Benedito also serves as executive director of Make Your Naynay Proud, an organization that encourages respect and love for mothers, while advocating for “diversity, tolerance, [and] love... one family at a time.”

Benedito pursued her graduate studies in sociology at the Ateneo de Manila University. While working at the university, a co-worker sexually harassed Benedito and the university did not provide Benedito protections. Benedito says this experience was a turning point in her political and activist career. Benedito’s experience with harassment highlighted for her the marginalized position of LGBT people in the Philippines and she became more involved in Ladlad’s efforts to put LGBT candidates on the ballot and fight for anti-discrimination laws.

After a Supreme Court battle in which the government tried to prevent Ladlad from running on the grounds of immorality, Ladlad ran its first candidates in 2010, with Benedito among them. She became the first trans person to stand for office in the Philippines. Despite winning hundreds of thousands of votes in the 2010 and 2013 elections, Ladlad did not win representation. However, as Ladlad’s chairperson, Bemz Benedito continues to lobby for the passage of the Anti-Discrimination Bill and other protections for LGBT Filipinos.

Definitions

For inclusion in the dataset, we rely on how individuals defined and identified themselves. We wanted to encompass any candidate or elected official who self-identified as trans* in a broad sense: to clarify, we follow two useful definitions, offered by Transgender Europe (Balza & Hutta 2012) and the Global Action for Trans* Equality (Eisfeld et al 2013).

From Transgender Europe

TRANS PEOPLE AND GENDER-VARIANT PEOPLE include those with a gender identity that is different from the gender they were assigned at birth, and those who wish to portray their gender in a way that differs from the gender they were assigned at birth. Among them are those people who feel they have to—or who prefer or choose to—present themselves in a way that conflicts with the social expectations of the gender role assigned to them at birth, whether they express this difference through language, clothing, accessories, cosmetics, or body modification. These include, among many others, transsexual and transgender people, trans men and trans women, transvestites, cross-dressers, no-gender, liminal-gender, multi-gender, and genderqueer people, as well as intersex people who relate

to or identify as any of the above. Also included are those who identify with local, indigenous, or subcultural terms and moreover subsume themselves under the terms ‘trans people’ or ‘gender-variant people’. And further included are those people in non-binary gender-systems who are raised in a different gender than male or female and who self-identify as trans people or gender-variant people in international contexts (Balza & Hutta 2012).

From Global Action for Trans Equality:*

TRANS*: People whose gender identity or expression differs from the gender assigned at birth. Some trans* people identify and present themselves as either a man or a woman; others identify with a non-binary gender category. Trans* people describe themselves by many different terms, some of which are specific to local cultures, including transgender, transsexual, fa’afafine, travesti, hijra, genderqueer, and transpinoy—to name just a few. Many global activists have started to use the abbreviation “trans*,” with an asterisk, denoting a placeholder for the entire range of possible gender identities that fall under the broad definition of trans*.

GENDER VARIANT: People whose gender expression varies from normative definitions of femininity or masculinity, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Some



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Kim Coco Iwamoto is a commissioner for the Hawaii State Civil Rights Commission. A former civil rights attorney at Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii and the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Iwamoto was first elected to public office in 2006 as a member of the Hawaiian State Board of Education. Her election made her the highest-ranking transgender public official in the United States.

Iwamoto's passion for education was cultivated through her experience testifying before the board of education as a foster parent for youth. During her first campaign for the board, she focused on education and did not bring attention to her gender identity. Over the course of two terms (2006–2011), Iwamoto helped implement a series of anti-bullying and harassment policies and drafted the 2011 Hawaii Safe Schools Act, which the state legislature passed. After her second term, Iwamoto was appointed to the State Civil Rights Commission, where she continues to serve as commissioner. In 2013, the White House honored Iwamoto as one of ten "Harvey Milk Champions of Change."

people use the more politicized terms "gender-nonconforming" or "genderqueer."

INTERSEX: People who were born with chromosomes, gonads and/or genitals that vary from female and male standards. A former medical term, "intersex" has been reclaimed by intersex people as a personal and political identity. In certain local contexts, intersex people have also reclaimed the older term "hermaphrodite" (or, more recently, "herm") and the abbreviation "inter*" (Eisfeld et al 2013).

We rely on candidates' self-identification for inclusion in this project. We include candidates from a wide range of trans*, intersex, and gender-variant identities, as reflected in these expansive guidelines, to capture a breadth of gender diversity. We use the term transgender, not to assign a single (Western) label, but to refer broadly speaking to this diverse set of "individuals whose gender identity or expression does not conform to the social expectations for their assigned birth" (Currah et al 2006, xiv). These social expectations may vary by geographic, national, class, racial, ethnic, and other contexts. The experiences of these many identities may (and do) also vary. That said, a considerable majority of the individuals we study in this project identify specifically as transgender.

Scope of Research

The field of transgender politics is still emerging. This report is intended as an early step toward a vibrant field of inquiry and scholarship. While we begin to address some important questions about transgender representation in formal institutions, there are many more questions that will warrant careful attention, both within and beyond this specific context. We hope to be of service in laying a foundation for more work on transgender politics and supporting a diversity of approaches and methods.

In this first report, we examine:

Who is running for office and who has been elected?

What is the pool of transgender people running for office? While we cannot say whether this group is representative of the broader transgender population, we can report on the demographics of the individuals who have entered the candidate pool. Who among these candidates actually succeeds in winning election?



In 2015, Tamara Adrian became the first trans person to run for political office in Venezuela. Adrian, a lesbian trans woman, is a candidate for Voluntad Popular in the December 6, 2015 Congressional elections. A lawyer and activist, Adrian argues that “lack of identity” is the main obstacle for trans Venezuelans and leads to discrimination in employment, education, health, and housing. In August 2015, Adrian was forced to register her candidacy under her birth name, due to a law prohibiting Venezuelans from changing their legal name or gender. Adrian underwent gender reassignment in 2002 and has unsuccessfully petitioned for recognition of her gender identity with the High Court of Venezuela since 2004.

In addition to her political involvement, Adrian serves as Trans Secretary for the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) and leads ILGA's Venezuela-based member organization, DIVERLEX. She teaches law at three universities in Venezuela—Universidad Central de Venezuela, Universidad Católica Andres Bello, and University Metropolitana.

Future questions for research include:

1 *How do transgender candidates campaign?*

How do trans* candidates talk about their gender identity, if at all, while seeking or holding office? Do trans* candidates have different experiences than their cisgender counterparts while seeking or holding office? Do they have substantively distinct attitudes or political agendas and, if so, must they moderate these attitudes in order to get elected?

2 *What is the impact of trans* candidates elected to public office?*

Once elected, to what extent do transgender politicians influence issues of importance to transgender (and LGB) communities? What do transgender candidates see as transgender issues? In short, does descriptive representation lead to substantive representation?

3 *What is the relationship between LGB and trans* progress?*

Does opinion change on LGB issues spill over to opinions on transgender issues? Flores (2015) finds that, in the American context, “interpersonal contact with someone who is lesbian or gay also leads to a secondary transfer of positive attitudes” toward transgender people. Does electing an LGB official or passing LGB-friendly law improve the likelihood of

electing a trans* candidate? Furthermore, do LGB elected officials work for transgender issues, and transgender elected officials work for LGB issues?

4 *How does representation vary across space and identity?*

How do these findings vary across geographic (e.g., Western/non-Western) contexts, ethnic and racial identifications, and between transmen, transwomen, indigenous, and gender non-conforming people?



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In the May 2015 general election, Charlie Kiss became the first trans man to run for parliament in the United Kingdom. Kiss stood for the Green Party in Islington South and Finsbury and, alongside Stella Gardiner, was one of two trans candidates to represent the Greens. Kiss lost to Labour incumbent, Emily Thornberry.

Kiss has been open about his identity as a trans man throughout his campaigns at both the local and national level. During his first political run for a council seat in Islington's Highbury East, Kiss described his female-to-male transition in campaign leaflets in an effort to be "upfront about it" and show his dedication to LGBT issues. Kiss, who experienced homelessness in his twenties, also campaigned for housing reform and greater employment opportunities for youth in his constituency.

Kiss first became involved in politics as a teenager when he joined the Greenham Women's Peace Camp to protest nuclear missile sites in Europe. He went to jail for his involvement in anti-nuclear activities, after which he struggled to find housing and employment. Kiss eventually began a fifteen-year career in the printing industry before transitioning to local government work and his run for political office.

Context

Politics is merely one strand of life and thus it is important to understand the conditions under which transgender people live around the world. It is also important to recognize that the conditions faced by transgender people involve more than legal rights and representation. Indeed, as Spade (2011, 14) argues, "legal declarations of 'equality' are often tools for maintaining stratifying social and economic arrangements." Therefore, in our analyses we incorporate social and political variables to capture structural influences on the experiences of transgender people. Still, legal reforms serve as one site among many for observing social change in attitudes about transgender people. Similarly, political representation serves as one signal among many of incorporation into existing political structures. Therefore, while we remain mindful of transgender experiences in a broader, more critical context, we focus in this paper on formal, political questions of elections, representation, and legal rights.

Legal Structures

Transgender people experience remarkably pervasive discrimination across political and

social contexts (Grant et al 2011). There are many legal structures that shape these experiences, including but not limited to: access to gender-affirming healthcare, state policies about changing one's name and gender marker on vital records (e.g., birth certificates and other state-issued forms of identification), nondiscrimination laws, and criminalization.

Access to affordable and gender-affirming healthcare is an important and fundamental need of the transgender community. This is especially true given that transgender people experience higher rates of extreme poverty, unemployment, and/or homelessness—often as a result of discrimination—and thus have both an increased need for and diminished access to adequate healthcare (Grant et al 2011). Therefore, we examine whether states permit or prohibit transgender-related healthcare and whether or not gender reassignment surgery is state-supported. We realize that access to healthcare is typically far more complex than simple permission or prohibition. Many states, for example, condition healthcare provision on adherence to particular psychological, medical, legal, or other requirements that prevent many trans* people from accessing needed care.¹

The ability to change one's name and gender marker on vital records is critically important

1: See the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) for further information regarding "standards of care."



Published with permission of Jowelle De Souza

Jowelle de Souza ran as an independent in the September 2015 general election to represent the San Fernando West constituency in Trinidad and Tobago's Lower House of Parliament. She campaigned on growing Trinidad and Tobago's economy, improving healthcare systems, and constitutional reform. De Souza faced pushback for her candidacy from Christian and Hindu leaders, due to her gender identity. As in much of the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago's government does not offer protections for LGBT individuals and same-sex relationships remain illegal.

De Souza, who, at age nineteen, was the first person to undergo sex reassignment surgery in the country, was also the first transgender person to sue the Trinidadian government for violation of her constitutional rights, after police unlawfully arrested and harassed her in 1997.

De Souza is known for her community activism. In 2014, Trinidad and Tobago's president awarded De Souza with the Hummingbird Medal for her work on animal rights issues. She also serves as a member of Trinidad and Tobago's Democracy Watch, an organization that works to engage young people in politics. De Souza is a hairstylist and owner of South Spa in San Fernando.

for reducing the possibility of discrimination and violence toward transgender people. When forms of identification do not match one's gender identity, every instance in which transgender people need to show ID heightens the possibility of scrutiny, discrimination, and violence—particularly when interacting with police and other power-wielding figures. Thus, the ability to change one's name and/or gender marker on vital records is a significant legal structure shaping the daily lives of transgender people and their access to basic needs and services.

Nondiscrimination laws are formal policies meant to protect individuals from discriminatory treatment due to their membership in a particular group. While these laws are subject to Spade's critique of legal declarations of equality, they are at the least symbolic statements that reflect the socio-political climate in which transgender people live. Furthermore, the focus of these policies on employment, housing, and public services addresses the daily lives and needs of transgender people (e.g., income and shelter), and provides some degree of legal cover or recourse in the event of discrimination. Legal recognition can also come in the form of accepting gender identity as a valid basis for seeking asylum, inclusion in

hate crimes law,² or acknowledging transgender identities in a state's constitution.

Criminalization laws, on the other hand, explicitly marginalize certain forms of behaviors or identities. In this report, we measure the criminalization of transgender identities, although we recognize that transgender people are also sometimes prosecuted under laws that criminalize homosexuality.

Therefore, we measure the legal structures shaping trans* lives in the following way, also building from the 2013 "Out in Office" report (Reynolds). For each nation state in 2015, we examine both supportive and oppressive structures.

- 1 Can one legally change their name?
- 2 Can one legally change their gender?
- 3 Is gender reassignment surgery funded by the state?
- 4 Is gender identity part of anti-discrimination law?
- 5 Can one claim asylum on the basis of gender identity persecution?
- 6 Is respect for trans identity upheld in the constitution?

²: While inclusion in hate crime law may reflect formal legal recognition of an identity or group, it does not necessarily reflect progress for that group. Marginalized groups the world over are often further persecuted using the prison system, and hate crimes law increases state and social investment in this prison system. Many trans* advocacy organizations (e.g., Sylvia Rivera Law Project) explicitly reject hate crimes law as a method of protecting and improving the lives of trans* people and other marginalized groups. We include data on hate crimes law in this project to acknowledge the disproportionate violence faced by trans* communities, while still remaining concerned about the broader structural impact of this particular type of legal recognition.

DIANE MARIE RODRÍGUEZ ECUADOR



Diane Marie Rodríguez Zambrano was the first transgender Ecuadorian to stand for elected office when she ran for a seat in the National Assembly in 2013. Her campaign under the Raptura 25 party banner was unsuccessful, but represented an important milestone in the involvement of transgender Ecuadorians in the political sphere.

In 1998, Ecuador added a non-discrimination clause to its constitution to protect Ecuadorians on the basis of sexual orientation. The constitution did not afford trans and intersex people the same rights and protections. In 2008, Rodríguez helped found Asociación Silueta X to fill the gap in protections and advocacy by working for trans and intersex Ecuadorians. Silueta X also advocates for poverty alleviation and HIV-AIDS prevention.

In 2009, Rodríguez sued the office of the Civil Registry to be allowed to change her given birth name to Diane Marie. Her victory set a legal precedent for all transgender citizens. In 2012, Rodríguez was attacked and kidnapped upon leaving the offices of Silueta X for her work on trans rights. After her release, she returned to work and campaigned for the National Assembly. In March 2015, Rodríguez was named one of five finalists for the Front Line Defenders Award, a Dublin-based international award that recognizes individuals who have shown immense commitment to defending human rights in their home countries.

- 7 Is gender identity included in hate crime law?
- 8 Is transgender identity criminalized?
- 9 Is there active prosecution of transgender people?
- 10 Is there state-sponsored discrimination?

Performance in these areas gives each country a score ranging between -3 and 6 (illustrated on page 13).

Between 2012 and 2015, ten nation states improved their overall legal treatment of transgender people, and no countries actually worsened their legal treatment (although many retained draconian and discriminatory laws). Half of those countries that passed measures to protect and recognize transgender people have seen transgender people run for office, and three of the ten elected transgender candidates. At this time, it appears that the majority of improvements in trans* rights are legislated by allies who identify as straight or LGB. Indeed, the LGBT inclusive constitution adopted by Nepal in 2015 was a legacy of the work of Sunil Babu Pant – the only openly gay member of the Nepalese Constitutional Assembly.

LGBT Advocacy Organizations

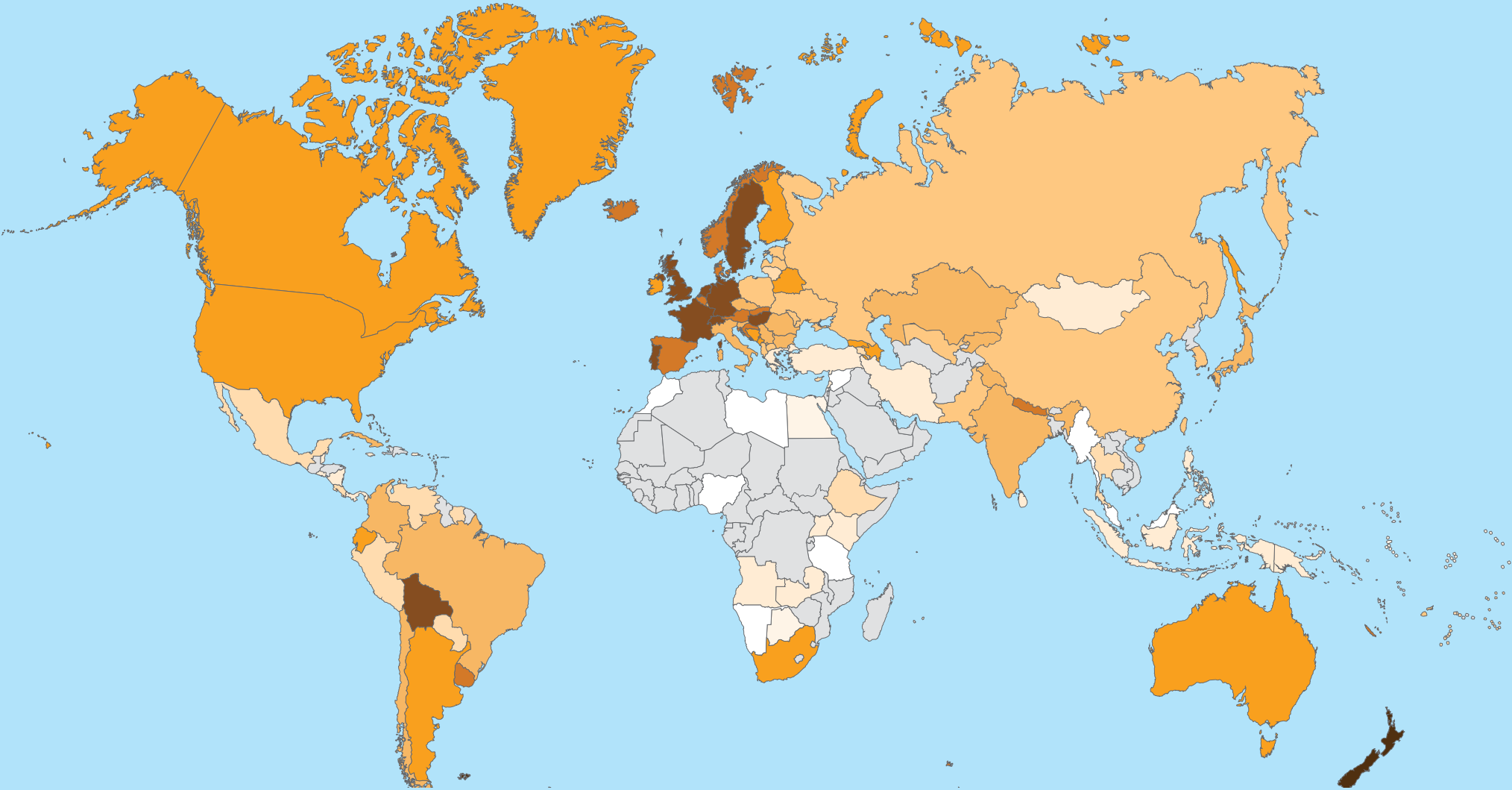
National and international LGBT advocacy groups also play important roles in shaping the social and

political climates in which transgender people live. As Eisfeld et al (2013, 10) explain:

Trans* and intersex groups are organizing at every level. Local and national groups are pressing for—and sometimes winning—laws to protect gender variant children from discrimination in schools. They are providing vital health information to their members and helping them access health service providers that respectfully meet the needs of trans* and intersex people. They are providing vocational training and helping people pursue education and find jobs. They are running arts and cultural programs that aim to change social norms about gender identity and body diversity, and they are fighting for trans* and intersex people's rights to change their legal gender without overly burdensome requirements that are prohibitive for the vast majority of sex and gender variant people around the world. Finally, they are providing spaces for trans* and intersex people to meet, organize, and build community, leadership and power so they can work to transform their own circumstances.

On a global scale, international and regional groups are working to bring about legal and policy reform by engaging in dialogue with decision-makers at the United Nations, World Health Organization, the International Olympic Committee and other international and regional bodies. They are also providing opportunities for local trans* and intersex groups to network

Trans* Legal Rights
2015



Trans* Legal Rights dataset available at lgbtrepresentationandrights.org





*The Heroines of My Life Blog by Monika Komajska,
published with permission of Petra De Sutter*

Following the May 2014 federal elections in Belgium, Petra De Sutter became the first transgender parliamentarian in the country after being co-opted by the Green Party to serve in the Belgian Senate. In the same election cycle, De Sutter ran for the European Parliament, garnering 47,000 votes and placing second for the Belgian Greens, who received one MEP seat. De Sutter campaigned on issues of environmental sustainability, science and education, public health, and LGBTI rights. In April 2015, Senator De Sutter appeared before the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to advocate for the right to self-determination regarding gender identity and for the passage of the Council's Trans Resolution to reduce transphobia and discrimination in Europe (the Trans Resolution passed 68-23). De Sutter, who came out at age 40, urged the Council to consider the social and public supports trans people need.

De Sutter is a gynecologist and directs the Department of Reproductive Medicine at Gent University Hospital. She also serves as a member of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology and is a professor of reproductive medicine at Gent University. Her medical background informs her policy interests in reproductive rights, surrogacy, and bioethics.

with others in their communities and around the world, enabling groups to share strategies across borders.

Broader Climate

Beyond policy and advocacy groups, there are also broader elements of the climate shaping trans* lives. Public opinion on gender roles, for example, are likely to be closely related to beliefs about gender non-conforming people. Similarly, attitudes toward homosexuality may be linked to attitudes toward trans* people (e.g., Flores 2015). Additionally, violence toward trans* and gender-diverse people is both pervasive and uncaptured by policy variables. Data from the Transgender Europe's Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) Project helps reflect this lived reality.

Comparing a country's trans* legal rights score to its rate of reported murders of trans* people (per million inhabitants), it becomes evident that these legal rights bear little relationship to curbing violence (see Chart 1). Though there is a slight downward trend, countries with both high and low scores on the trans* legal rights index nonetheless have similar rates of reported murders (e.g., Uruguay and Belize). Brazil has the highest number of unique election attempts by trans* candidates in Central and South America, but also has the second highest rate of reported murders of trans* people, at 3.439 per million

inhabitants. Honduras has the highest reported rate in the world, at a rate of 9.321 murders per million inhabitants. These findings are even more disturbing considering the severe under-reporting of violence against and murders of trans* and gender variant people around the world.

The context of criminalization is important to consider beyond whether transgender identities are explicitly criminalized. Both the prison industrial complex and the legality of sex work shape the context in which transgender people find safety and employment. In the face of rampant structural and social discrimination, many transgender people are forced into underground economies, including sex work, to survive. This places many trans* people at an even greater risk of violence and vulnerability, and particularly when sex work is criminalized. Indeed, according to the Trans Murder Monitoring Project, "65% of all murdered trans and gender-diverse people whose profession is known were sex workers." Criminalization only increases the likelihood that a sex worker will interact with a police or state official, which creates additional exposure to violence—this time at the hands of those with state support. We have included in our legal rights index the criminalization of transgender identity and active persecution or state-sponsored discrimination. Future work should also incorporate more explicitly the legal status of sex work and underground economies, and state investment in the prison system.



City of Houston, Public Domain

On November 17, 2010, Phyllis Frye was appointed as an Associate Judge for the City of Houston Municipal Courts, becoming the first openly transgender judge in the state of Texas. Even before her swearing in, Frye was known locally and internationally for her work advocating for the legal rights of trans communities.

Frye grew up in San Antonio and was a cadet and engineering major at Texas A&M before entering the military. While stationed in West Germany, Frye opened up about her struggles with gender identity and was subsequently forced to undergo drug and aversion therapies before being asked to resign. Following her resignation, Frye faced persistent discrimination and unemployment as she sought civil engineering and federal government jobs. From 1976–1980, Frye lobbied successfully for the repeal of a Houston municipal ordinance that criminalized cross-dressing. Her experiences with institutionalized discrimination led her to pursue a law degree at the University of Houston.

In 1986, Frye began practicing criminal defense law, while working to organize trans individuals who were excluded from gay and lesbian rights activism at the time. She organized the first International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment in 1992, where participants drafted the International Bill of Gender Rights. Today, in addition to serving as a judge, Phyllis Frye runs a private law practice (Frye, Oaks and Benavidez) focused on “liberating the law.” Frye represents clients facing trans legal issues, including identity recognition and legal rights.

Chart 1: *Trans* Legal Rights and Reported Murders of Trans* People*

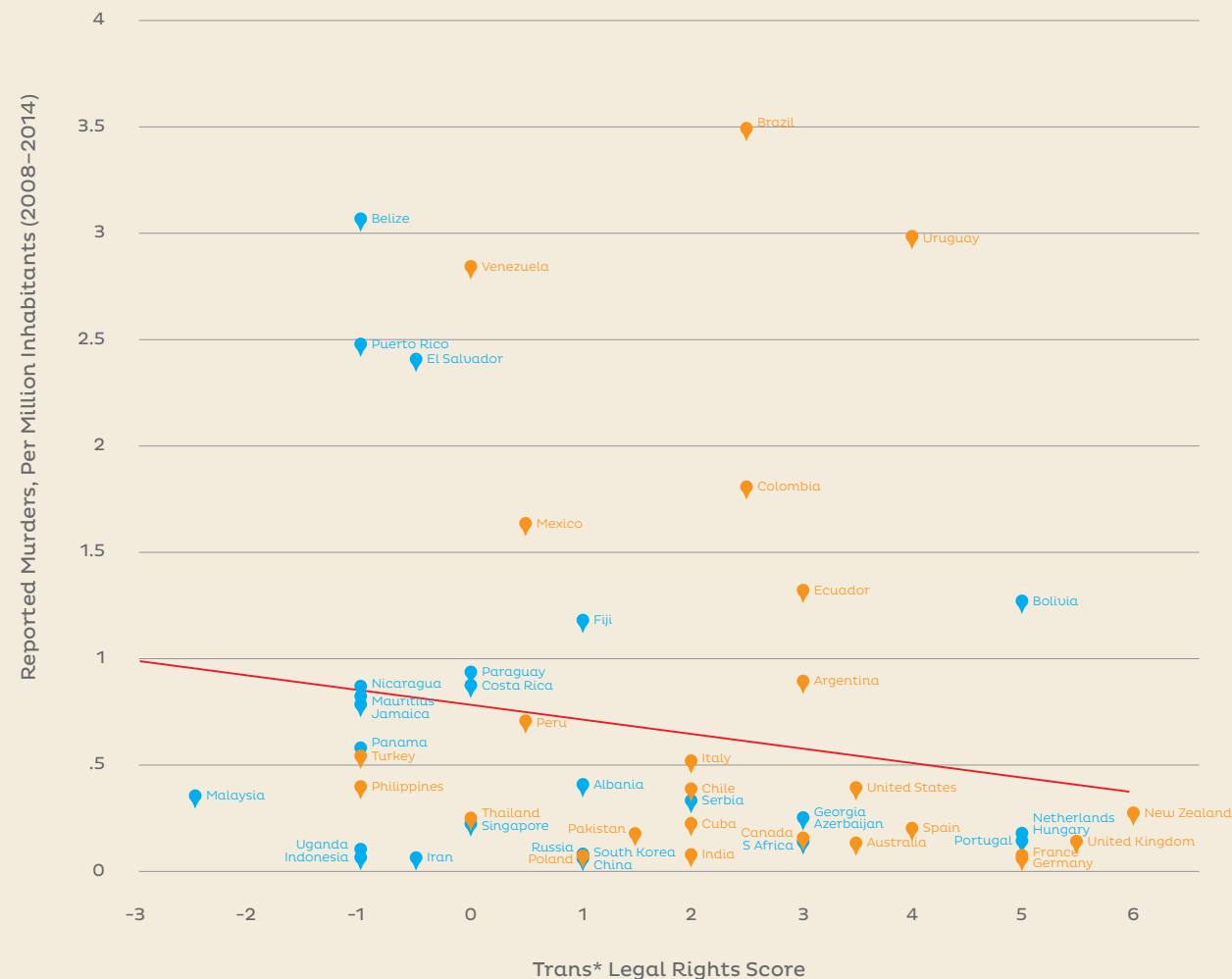
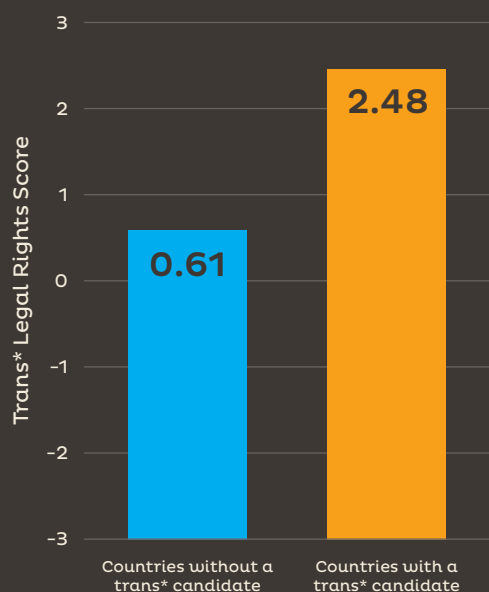


Chart 1 Key: ● Countries without a trans* candidate ● Countries with a trans* candidate

Chart 1 Source: Violence data from the Trans Murder Monitoring Project.

Chart 2: Average Trans* Legal Rights Score in Countries With and Without Trans* Candidates



However, while this legal rights score may have little impact on reported violence, it does seem to bear some relationship to trans* people running for office (see Chart 2). The average legal rights score in countries that have never seen a transgender or gender variant person run for office is 0.61. Across the 30 countries with a trans* candidate, the average score is 2.48.

Given this relationship, we investigate how trans* legal rights and the presence of trans* political candidates interact with other socio-political variables. Using data from the World Development Indicators, there is evidence for a relationship between economic development and legal rights for transgender people (see Chart 3). Countries with low GDP per capita are more tightly clustered along the negative end of the legal rights index. Indeed, only one country with a GDP per capita of over \$30,000 has a negative legal rights score (Andorra). The positive relationship between this measure of economic development and trans* legal scores is even stronger among the countries that have seen a trans* candidate stand for office. Additionally, in the 30 countries with a trans* candidate, the average GDP per capita is nearly \$27,000, compared to barely \$14,000 in countries that have never had a transgender candidate.³

Similarly, trans* and gender variant people may be more likely to run in countries that are more gender-progressive. One way to measure such ideology is examining the number of women elected to office. Countries that are friendlier to women in office may also be friendlier to transgender candidates. A direct test would be to compare the proportion of women in office to the number of trans* and gender variant people attempting election, but unfortunately there is too little current variation in the number of trans candidates. However, the data does reveal that across the 30 countries with a transgender or gender variant candidate the average proportion of women in national legislatures is 26%. In countries without a trans* candidate, that average is only 20.7%. Furthermore, it is also clear that the proportion of women holding seats in a national parliament is related to improved legal rights for trans* people (see Chart 4 on page 18). For example, all countries (except one, Japan) with fewer than 10% women in government have a score of zero or below. While these findings are certainly related—the same progressive ideology that increases the electoral success of women candidates would also improve the likelihood that trans* friendly laws will pass—they support the argument that more women in office improves the climate for transgender people and politicians.

³: Excluding economic outliers Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Monaco.

Chart 3: Trans* Legal Rights and Economic Development

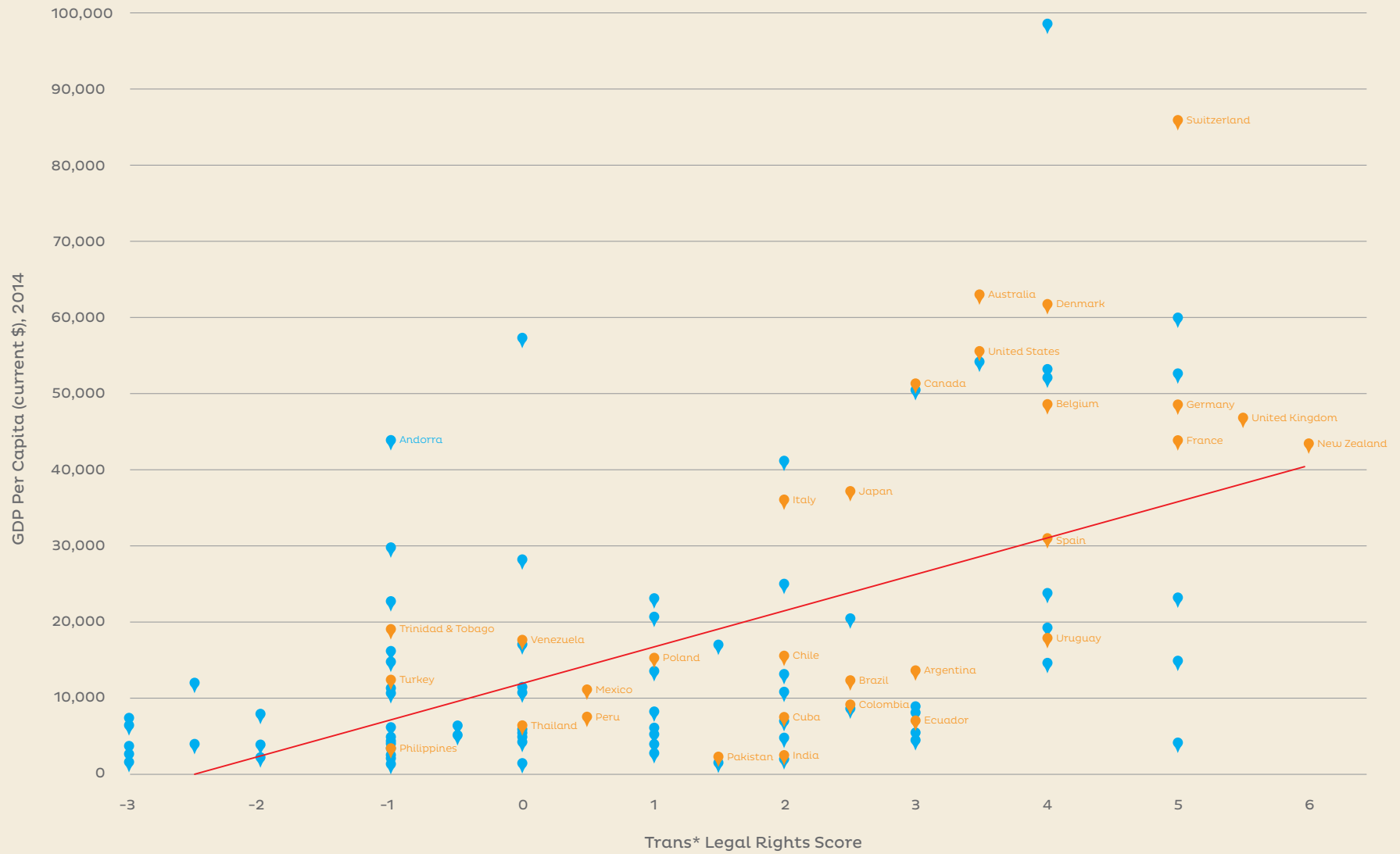


Chart 3 Key: ◆ Countries without a trans* candidate ◆ Countries with a trans* candidate Chart 3 Source: World Development Indicators

Chart 4: *Trans* Legal Rights and the Proportion of Seats Held By Women in National Legislatures (2014)*

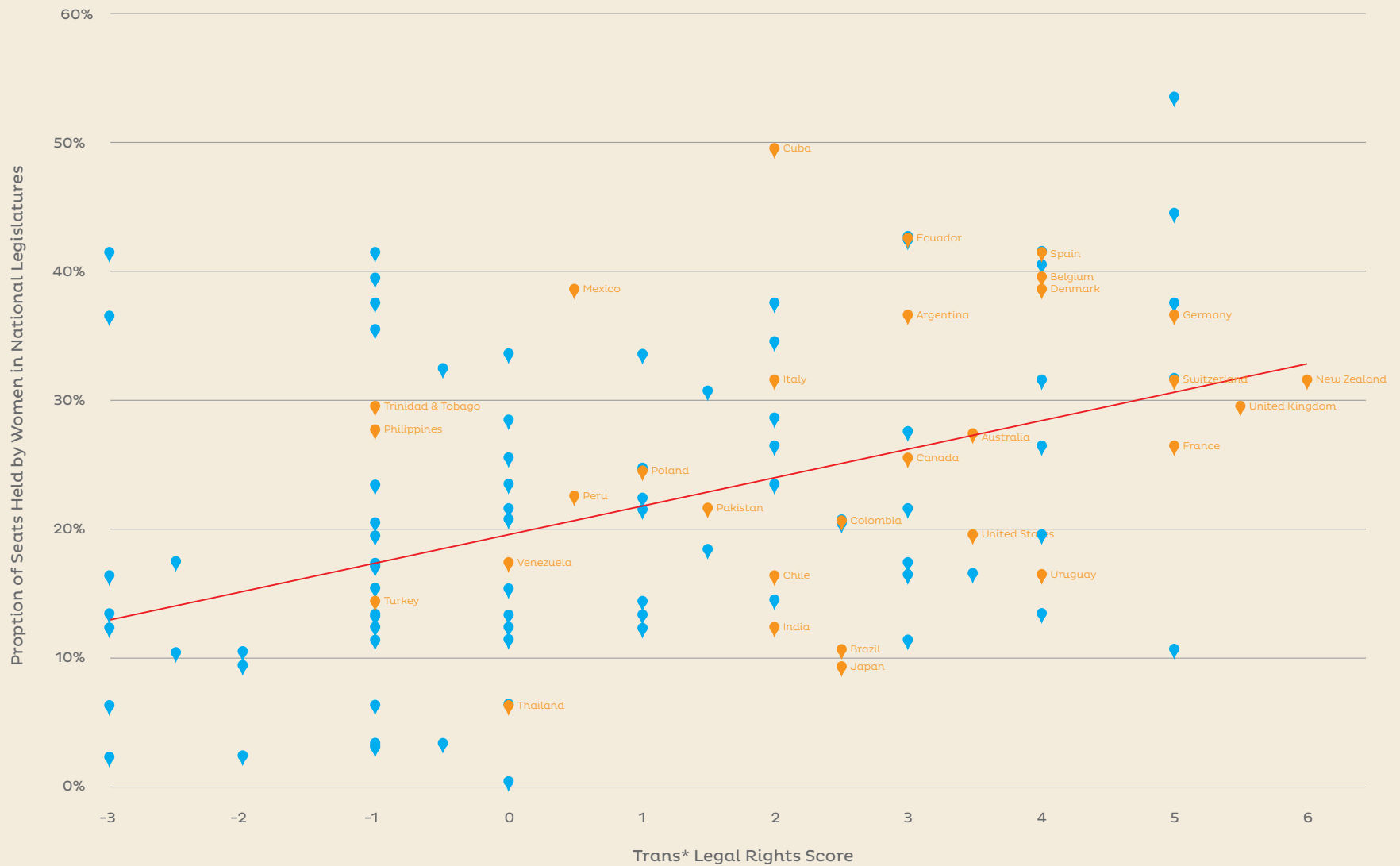


Chart 4 Key: ◆ Countries without a trans* candidate ◆ Countries with a trans* candidate

The Data

Data on transgender candidates and elected officials has not been systematically collected before. In collecting the data, we drew on a variety of sources, seeking to confirm information from multiple avenues (see Appendix 2). We have only included individuals who self-identify as transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming (or the local nomenclature). It is quite likely that we have missed some transgender leaders elected to lower levels of government and candidates who failed in their bids, but we are confident this is the most comprehensive survey of transgender electoral politics that has been published. We have identified **126 individuals from 30 countries, running in 209 races, and being elected 72 times, from 1977 to 2015.**

There are a number of instantly striking features that emerge from the database. First, while 126 trans*, intersex, and gender non-conforming politicians standing for election is a number far higher than many would have expected, it is a drop in the ocean compared to the global universe of candidates running for elected office. Every year, many hundreds of thousands of people offer themselves for election to public offices from small town school board to national president. We do not have aggregate data for women and LGB representation in all elected positions

globally, but we can compare parliamentary (lower house) representation across these groups. As of September 2015, there were 10,162 female members of parliament (MPs) out of approximately 45,000. There were 158 lesbian, gay, or bisexual MPs and only two transgender MPs in office (Anna Grodzka in Poland and Petra de Sutter in Belgium). We have only identified just over 20 transgender elected officials *currently* in office at any level across the globe.

Nevertheless, it may be disingenuous to suggest that transgender individuals *cannot* be elected, when so few communities are ever given the option of voting for a candidate who happens to be transgender, gender variant, or gender non-conforming. Of the 126 out transgender politicians found running for office, 48 were elected (or appointed to high office, one example being the Belgian Senator Petra de Sutter)—a success rate of nearly 40%. Indeed, including re-election, over one-third of all the races contested by transgender candidates are successful. It is quite possible, indeed probable, that trans* candidates face particular prejudicial hurdles against their election, but we cannot simply assume that from this dataset.

What we can say is that simply getting to the point of running for office is the largest hurdle. Indeed, the dataset does not reveal the number of trans* and gender variant people who considered running for office but decided or were persuaded

YOLLADA “NOK” SUANYOT THAILAND

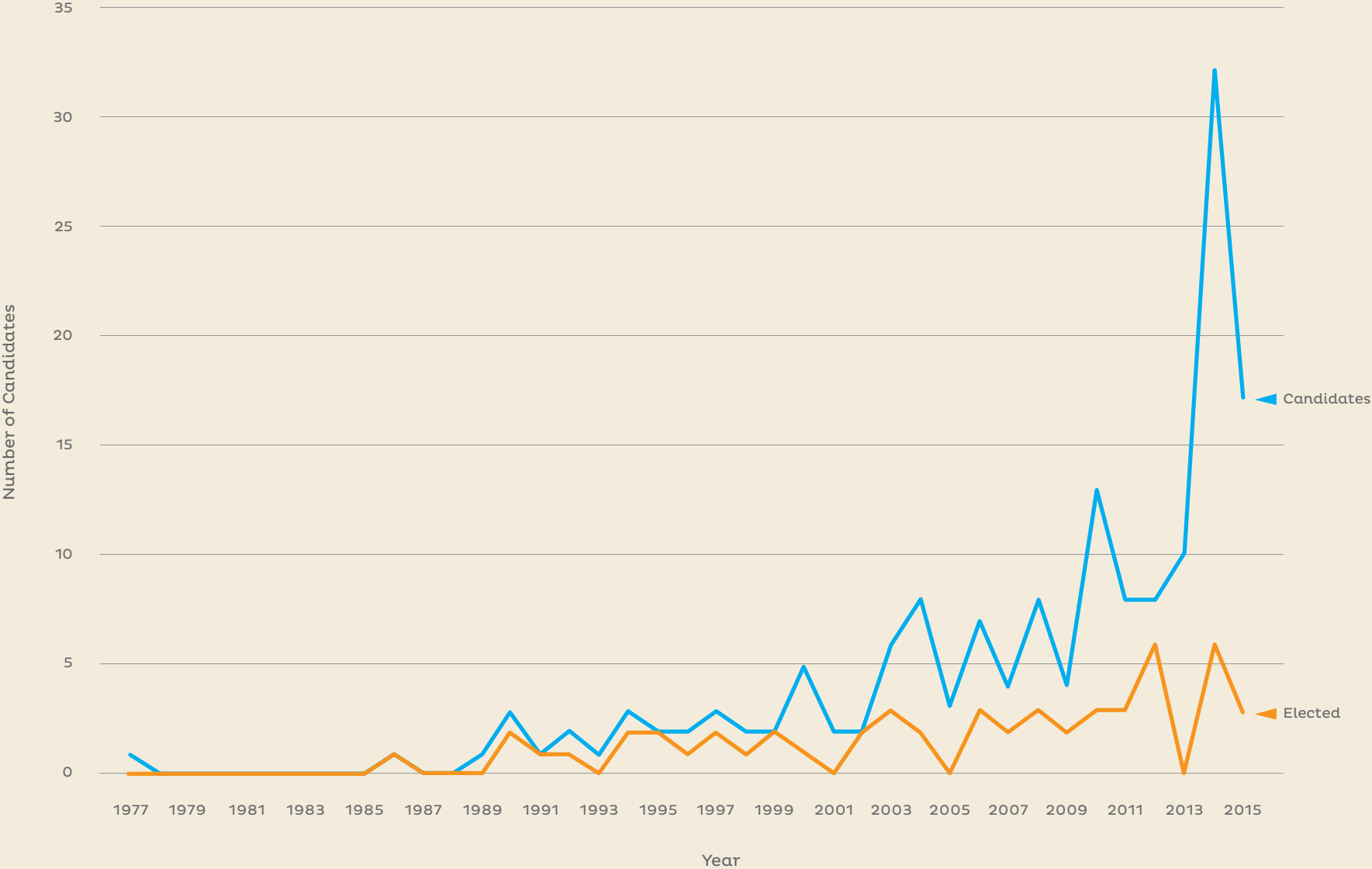


Public Domain

In May 2012, Yollada “Nok” Suanyot was elected to the Provincial Administration Organization in the Nan province of Thailand. In an unlikely victory of an independent candidate running against the ruling Pheu Thai party, Suanyot’s election made her the highest-ranking trans official in Thailand. Suanyot, who was born in Nan and identifies as a transsexual woman, campaigned on economic growth, flooding issues, and education in the province as well as for trans and women’s rights.

Prior to her election, Suanyot was well known for her work in the music and television industries. She was previously a member of a trans pop group, Venus Flytrap, and continues to manage a home shopping television network. At age 16, Suanyot moved from Nan to Bangkok to attend university and undergo sex reassignment surgery, which was not available in other parts of Thailand. During this time, she was arrested for entering a beauty competition using a female ID. Today, Suanyot also serves a president of the TransFemale Association of Thailand, which provides support and financial assistance to trans teens.

Chart 5: Number of Transgender Candidates and Elected Officials by Year





Published with permission of Tony Briffa

In 2011, Tony Briffa became the world's first openly intersex mayor when they were elected to represent the City of Hobson's Bay in Melbourne, Australia. Briffa, who was born with Partial Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome and identifies as both male and female, had previously held a seat in the city council and served as deputy mayor for two terms (2009–10; 2010–11). During Briffa's time in local government, Briffa served on numerous committees related to LGBTI rights, interfaith and multicultural communities, and urban planning. Briffa has also been a longtime Bail Justice and Justice of the Peace and currently serves as Vice President of the Organisation Intersex International Australia.

Briffa came out as intersex at age 29 and has been an outspoken advocate for addressing institutional discrimination toward intersex individuals. Prior to the passage of the 2013 Sex Discrimination Amendment, which extended protections and rights to intersex persons, Briffa was not allowed to identify as both male and female, and was instead forced to mark "X" (for indeterminate sex) on government forms. Briffa, who married in New Zealand, has also appeared before the Australian Senate to advocate for the 2014 Recognition of Foreign Marriages Bill. In their address, Briffa stated, "I technically could have married my wife in Australia but...I'd have to forget the female part of me." Briffa announced their resignation from the mayor's office in 2014 in order to spend more time with family and to focus on human rights activism.

otherwise, nor the individuals who have been systematically disenfranchised from political participation, let alone running for office. Transgender people may feel unable to present themselves to participate in the political system due to fear or threats of additional violence, discrimination, or backlash. It may also be the case that gatekeepers to candidacy—political parties, donors, incumbents, and the like—are not inclined to back trans* candidates or believe that they are electorally viable. In the British general election of 2015, there were only four transgender candidates out of a record high 155 LGBT candidates. Indeed, the vast majority of those 155 British candidates—86%—were gay men. While lesbian, gay, and bisexual people seem increasingly able or willing to run for election, transgender individuals remain less so.

The number of trans* candidates and elected officials today mirrors the state of play for gay men in the early 1980s. However, forty years after the first openly gay man was elected to national office (in the Netherlands), the election of a gay man anywhere in the world remains newsworthy and the total numbers remain small. The election of a lesbian or bisexual person today is even more noteworthy. Therefore, the commonality of transgender candidates seems still firmly lodged in the distant, rather than near, future.

Over the last three decades, the typical profile of a transgender candidate is an independent-

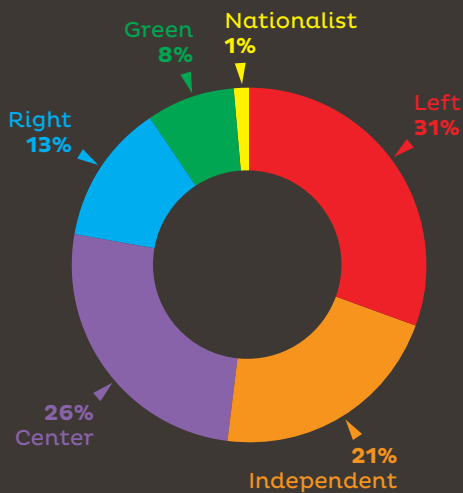
minded activist who has abundant courage, but whose chances are small. In these early days of transgender visibility in electoral politics, merely running for office is often the victory. Even unsuccessful candidates can improve the climate for future candidates and acclimate voters to transgender community leaders.

The first transgender-identified political candidate of modern times was Carmen Rupe, who ran for Mayor of Wellington, New Zealand in 1977. Rupe, a Māori, grew up in a large family on a livestock farm in Taumarunui on the North Island. She moved to Sydney, Australia in 1957 and gained fame as a drag performer, leaving the city in 1968 after repeated police harassment. In an interview with the *New Zealand Herald* she recalled, "The police were very, very heavy. They hated gay people. They hated drag queens and they hated lesbians. They used to take us into the police station and give us a hiding and beat us up. I was locked up in Long Bay prison about a dozen times. But it made me a stronger person today."

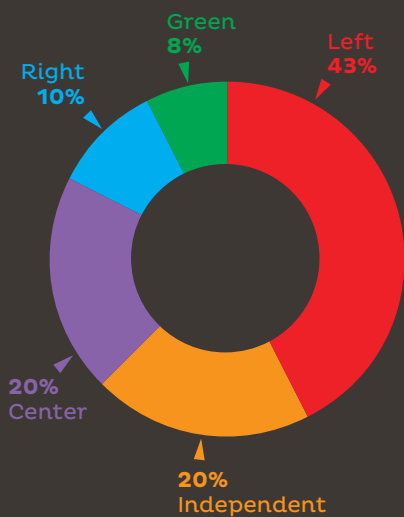
After leaving Australia, Rupe moved to the capital of her homeland, Wellington, and opened a coffeehouse with an adult nightclub above. In 1977, with the financial backing of the property mogul Bob Jones, she ran against the incumbent mayor Michael Fowler. Her campaign focused on the decriminalization of prostitution, abortion, and homosexuality, alongside lowering the drinking age and allowing bars to stay open later.

Chart 6: Partisan Ideology of Trans* Candidates and Elected Officials

Candidates



Elected Officials



Jones saw her as a puppet who would draw attention to his libertarian and free market ideas, but Rupe drew large crowds of her own with her flamboyance and by laying bare the hypocrisy of politicians who would spend the daytime condemning her nightclub and the nighttime enjoying it. She lost the election.

Georgina Beyer, another Māori and the first trans* candidate to be elected to any parliament worldwide, said upon Rupe’s death, “I looked up to her.... I have such huge respect for her. She provided us with visibility.... We’re losing a generation of pioneering transgender people... we must not forget the lessons they taught us and the opportunities they created for us all.” It is instructive, in a time where transgender recognition is often lauded as a symbol of western progressivism or exceptionalism, to note that the first trans* candidate anywhere and first trans* national Member of Parliament were indigenous Māoris.

Nine years after Rupe’s race, Rachael Webb made history as the first out trans candidate to be successfully elected to public office. In 1986, Webb, a truck driver and union organizer, was elected as a Labour Party Councillor in the London borough of Lambeth. Between 1967 and 1978, Webb was prescribed hormones at three different times and married twice and had four children. She was part of the militant wing of the British Labour Party and became a poster

child for the tabloid bogeyman of the “loony left,” which newspapers like the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* demonized to great effect. The image of an out-of-step with middle England Labour Party, pandering to progressive causes and marginalized (i.e., non-traditional) communities, hurt Labour badly in the General Election of 1987.

Despite this, Webb won a seat in the Ferndale, Vauxhall ward of Lambeth Council with nearly four times as many votes as the runner-up. Webb was reelected in 1990, but from a different ward, Gipsy Hill in Upper Norwood. She decided not to run for re-election in 1994 and returned to truck driving and union organizing. Sadly, she took her own life in 2009.

Partisan Ideology

One might expect that, like Rachael Webb, transgender political activists would be mostly attached to radical and progressive political parties that embrace diversity and marginalized communities, especially parties of the left. But in fact, transgender candidates are relatively spread between running for parties of the left, the center, and independents (see Chart 6). One in ten stand under the banner of either right wing or Green parties. However, elected candidates are much more likely to be from the left than other parties. Over 50% of left-wing party candidates are victorious compared to a 33% success rate for independents and 25% victory rate for centrists.

Right wing and Green candidates' success rates hover at just under 30%.

It is also striking that transgender politicians are much more likely than their cisgender counterparts to run as independents and indeed be elected as independents. Many trans* people do not find a welcoming home in mainstream political parties, and instead find that their priorities and concerns are not paramount to such parties. Traditional political parties can be outright hostile or at best ambivalent to the needs of trans* communities. It comes as no surprise then that many trans* people choose instead to run as independents.

Gender Identity

While most candidates in our dataset identify as transgender, some also identify as hijra, gender non-conforming, or intersex. Overwhelmingly, elected officials (90%) and unsuccessful candidates (88%) are transwomen. In our dataset, there are only seven out transmen who have ever stood for office (Mark Rees, Gypsy Meltzer, Osh Gantly, Mel Wymore, Charlie Kiss, Alecs Recher, and Jack Knoxville). Four were elected (Rees, Meltzer, Gantly, and Recher). Though this is an extremely small group for comparison, this early evidence may suggest that when transmen do run for office, they may be more successful than transwomen. This would be consistent with the persistent influence of sexism and structural

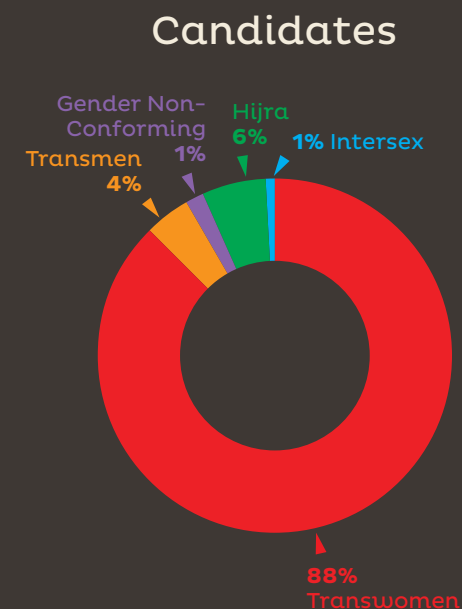
obstacles to women (in this case, transwomen) seeking political office.

While a few elected officials come out or are outed as transgender while in office (e.g., Nikki Sinclair (UK), Michaela Lindner (Germany), and Alecs Recher (Switzerland)), the majority are out and visible when they run for office. Conversely, in the first twenty years of lesbian women and gay men running for national office, a majority of representatives were not out when elected, but came out or were outed while in office (Reynolds 2013). Haider-Markel (2010) argues that in modern American politics, when gay and lesbian candidates make strategic choices about the districts in which they run, they can actually potentially benefit from being out: their identity might garner them additional volunteers, funding, and support from LGBT people and organizations, even beyond their district. While the electoral viability of trans* candidates remains questionable, it is encouraging to see a dedicated commitment of many candidates to publicly identifying themselves as a member of the trans* community in their pursuit of office.

Where in the World?

The vast majority of transgender candidates and elected officials can be found in democracies with higher levels of wealth and human development. There are significant histories of transgender communities competing for office in South and

Chart 7: *Transgender Candidate Identity*





In 2003, Aya Kamikawa was elected to the Setagaya Ward Assembly in Tokyo. Amidst great media attention, she became the first transgender elected official in Japan, placing 6th of 72 candidates. After four years of advocating for the LGBT community, children, and marginalized groups, Kamikawa was re-elected in 2007, polling second overall among 71 candidates. She was re-elected for a third term in 2011.

Kamikawa, a public relations executive, changed her gender identity on the national register in 2005, two years after Japanese law was altered to allow for such a change. After spending more than a decade in public office, Kamikawa is still one of the very few LGBT elected officials in a nation where being openly gay or transgender remains something of a taboo. She continues to argue that visibility is crucial to acceptance and reform. "If we do not raise our voices, people deem us as non-beings and end up labeling us as sexual perverts," Kamikawa has said. Kamikawa helps coordinate a group of Japanese LGBT lawmakers, bureaucrats, and lawyers, who have been meeting in private in Tokyo for several years.

Southeast Asia, but there is no experience of visible electoral participation for transgender people in Africa and Eastern Europe (outside of Poland). However, the type of election system seems less consequential. Indeed, the majority of transgender elected officials have been elected under single member district first-past-the-post systems, which are normally deemed to be less advantageous to candidates from minority communities.

Over half of all candidates and nearly half of all elected candidates are from the United States or United Kingdom. But there have been candidates and elected officials throughout the world—30 countries in total. In all, 20 countries have seen a successful transgender candidate: just over one-third from Europe, 20% from the USA, with a smattering in Latin America, Australasia, and Asia. The success rate varies considerably with over half of transgender candidates in Europe being elected, around 40% in Latin America and Australasia, one-third in Asia, and less than one-third in North America. The numbers are small, but they indicate a receptiveness to transgender candidates in Latin America that is significantly higher than in the United States. Indeed, Latin American countries have moved further toward embedding transgender rights in the law than any other region of the world (Corrales 2015).

However, this finding contrasts with equally entrenched rates of violence against trans*

people, as reported by the Trans Murder Monitoring Project. From 2008 to 2014, 78% of the reported murders of trans and gender variant people around the world occurred in Central and South America. As Transgender Europe points out, this disconnect between legal equality (and the strong trans movements that advocate for it) and rates of violence illustrate an important concern: the severe underreporting of violence against trans and gender-diverse people around the world, even in the face of growing legal protections.

The Nature of Competition

There is a significant difference between competitive candidates and long-shot candidates who potentially help acclimatize the polity to accepting future transgender candidates. The data suggests a bifurcated pool. With a few notable exceptions, candidates are either strongly competitive or not competitive at all. Of the over 100 races where transgender candidates were unsuccessful in their bids for office, only four—Americans Dana Beyer in Maryland and Paula Sophia in Oklahoma, and British Anwen Muston in Wolverhampton and Zoe O'Connell in Cambridge, England—came close to winning. O'Connell was ultimately victorious two years later.

Of those elected, approximately one-third had run before—some as identified under their birth-assigned sex, others as transgender—compared to only one-quarter of unsuccessful candidates.

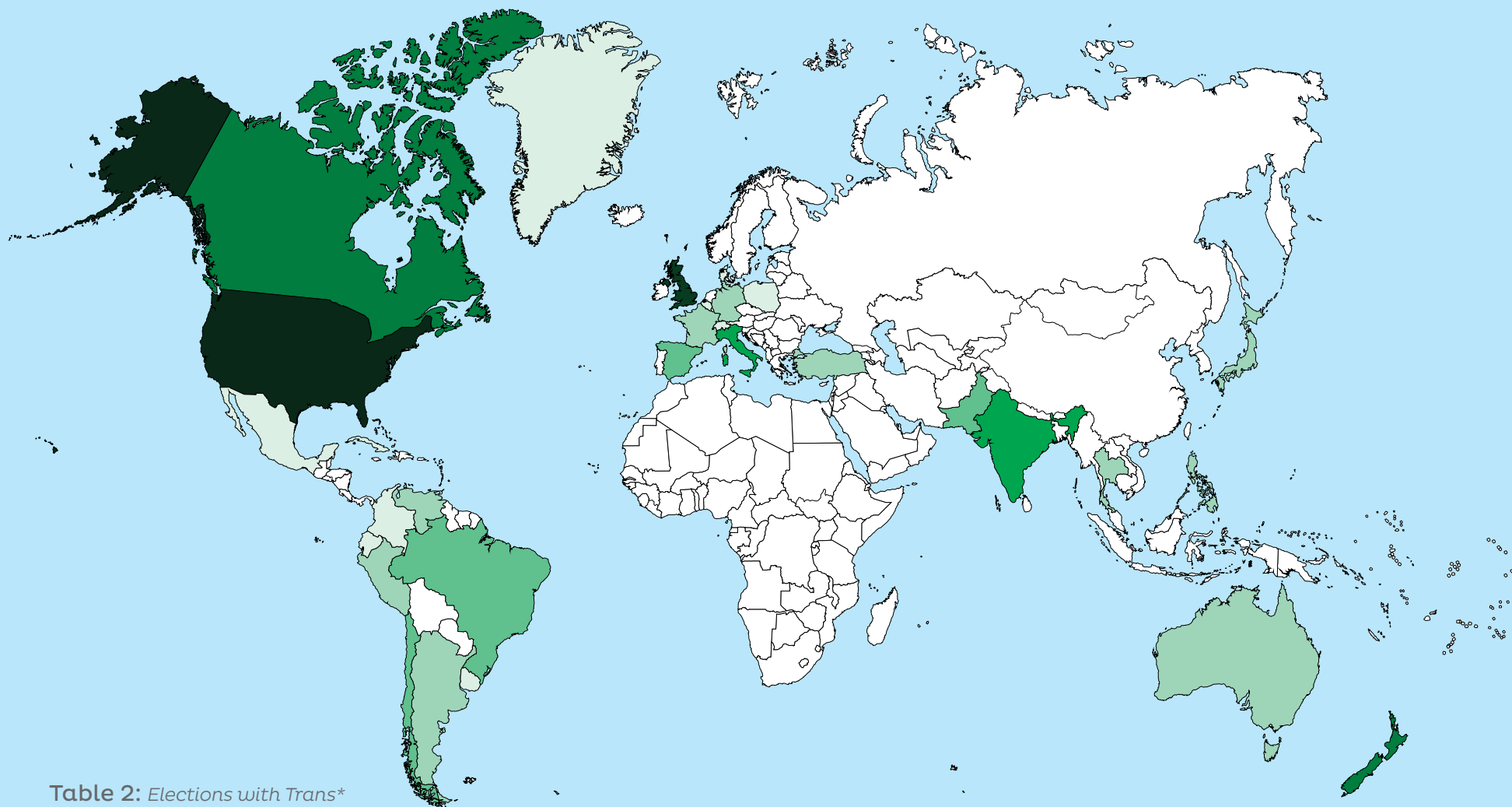
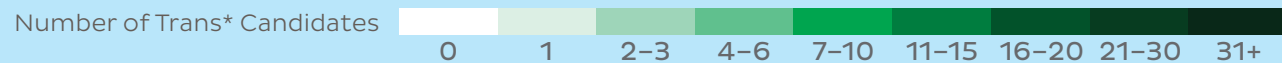


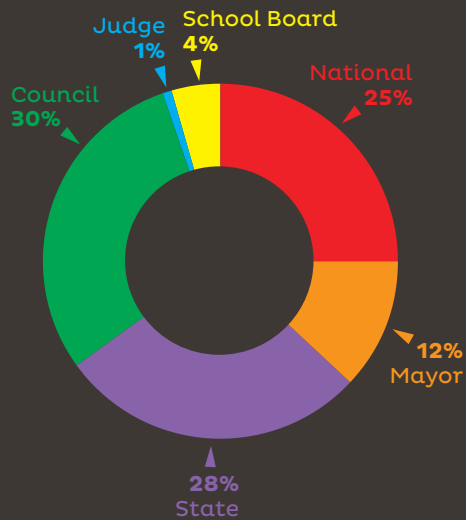
Table 2: Elections with Trans* Candidates by Country

Country	# Candidates	# Elected	Country	# Candidates	# Elected	Country	# Candidates	# Elected	Country	# Candidates	# Elected
Argentina	3	0	Denmark	1	0	New Zealand	14	8	Trinidad & Tobago	1	0
Australia	3	3	Ecuador	1	0	Pakistan	4	0	Turkey	2	0
Belgium	1	1	France	2	1	Peru	2	1	UK	30	16
Brazil	7	4	Germany	2	1	Philippines	3	1	USA	83	17
Canada	12	0	India	9	3	Poland	1	1	Uruguay	1	1
Chile	5	4	Italy	7	4	Spain	4	2	Venezuela	2	0
Colombia	1	0	Japan	3	3	Switzerland	1	1			
Cuba	1	1	Mexico	1	0	Thailand	2	2			

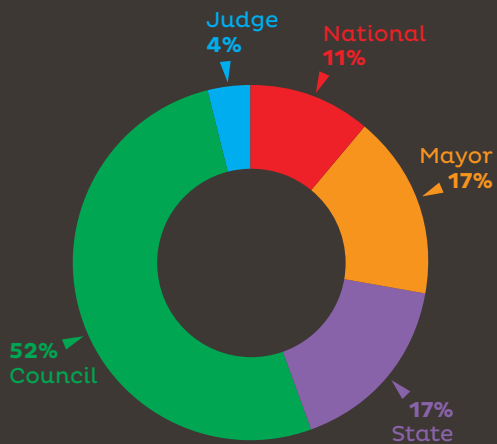
Candidates refers to the # of attempted elections, not individual candidates

Chart 8: *Running for What?*

Candidates



Elected Officials



This indicates that transgender leaders are more likely to win after laying the ground in an earlier race. Once elected, a high proportion do stand for reelection, and the majority are successful. This is consistent with those findings related to cisgender lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual office holders. Crucially, transgender elected officials do not appear to be more vulnerable to defeat during re-election efforts than do their cisgender counterparts.

Transgender candidates have not yet reached the threshold of running for the highest elected executive offices, such as President or Governor. While there have been a number of candidates for national office, only three have won: Georgina Beyer of New Zealand, Anna Grodzka of Poland, and Vladimir Luxuria of Italy. The vast majority of trans* candidates have run for local level offices. The success rate varies considerably by office: just over 10% of candidates running for national parliament, one-third for the European parliament, just under half of mayoral candidates, 20% of state legislators, and half of local council aspirants.

The rules of the election systems that our candidates have to work within vary from classic Westminster winner-take-all to full proportional representation (PR) list systems. Over 70% of the transgender candidates have run under First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) elections, while only 20% ran under list PR systems or the PR side of

a mixed system. Nevertheless, while one-third of transgender candidates running under FPTP systems are elected, a slightly higher proportion of candidates running on PR lists are elected. This is expected, as list systems tend to be friendlier to electing candidates from marginalized communities. (This is not mirrored when it comes to LGB candidates who are as likely to be elected under FPTP than any other system.)

Almost all elected trans* candidates have been elected in robust democracies, apart from one councillor in Cuba. One transgender mayor and one state legislator were elected in Thailand, but they were elected during a democratic electoral period in Thailand—a country that alternates between electoral democracy and military rule. It is also true that there is no obvious pattern as to where transgender candidates offer themselves. When running locally, they are as likely to be in rural villages and regions as urban areas and big cities. One might expect transgender people generally to gravitate to cities, but politically their activities seem to be focused on where they grew up rather than their adopted homes. Surprisingly, successful transgender candidates tend to be younger (average age 44) than those who are unsuccessful (average age 52).

Conclusion

This report has attempted to lay a foundation for studying trans* and gender variant candidates and elected officials around the world. To date, while there is some diversity, the archetypal transgender candidate was assigned male at birth, identifies as a woman, runs for a position on the local council in an English speaking country, is approximately 48 years old, and hails from the majority ethnic group of the local community. Indeed, the vast majority of all candidates identify as transwomen. Success rates vary considerably by the level of office sought, but overall, trans* candidates are successful roughly one-third of the time they run.

Though important LGBT political and legal advances have occurred in many countries—including the introduction of transgender candidates for office—rates of violence and discrimination remain remarkably high. Structural inequalities, cultural attitudes, and prejudice are slow to change. Jennifer Gale, an American transwoman and former Marine, ran for office thirteen times without winning once. She died homeless in 2008.

The trans* and gender variant people and their experiences at the heart of this report exemplify the nuance of social progress for trans* communities: even when formal representation occurs or is attempted, such access or incorporation is only one step among many toward changing the material, lived realities of trans* and gender variant people. What remains to be seen—and studied in future research—is the impact of such representation on these material realities.

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Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates

Country	Name	Place	Office	Election Date
ARGENTINA	Lohana Berkins	Salta	National Assembly	2001
	Pamela Ordoñez	Santiago del Estero	Councillor	2014
	María José Ybáñez	Santiago del Estero	Councillor	2014
AUSTRALIA	Tony Briffa	Hobsons Bay	Mayor	★ 2011
	Tony Briffa	Hobsons Bay	Councillor	★ 2008, 2012
BELGIUM	Petra De Sutter	National	Senator - Appointed	★ 2014
BRAZIL	Katielly Lanzini	Chapecó	Councillor	2000
	Katielly Lanzini	Santa Catarina	State Legislator	2004, 2006
	Kátia Tapety	Colônia do Piauí	Councillor	★ 1992, '96, '00
	Kátia Tapety	Lucia de Moura Sá	Deputy Mayor	★ 2004
CANADA	Enza Anderson	Toronto	Mayor	2000
	Enza Anderson	Toronto	Councillor	2003, 2010
	Susan Gapka	Toronto Centre	House of Commons	2015
	B Garneau	Regina Wascana Plains, Saskatchewan	State Legislator	2014
	Jamie Lee Hamilton	Vancouver	Councillor	1996
	Jamie Lee Hamilton	Vancouver	Parks & Recreation	2008
	Nicole Joliet	Surrey	School Board	2014
	Jennifer McCreath	St. John's	Deputy Mayor	2015
	Jennifer McCreath	Avalon	House of Commons	☆ 2015
	Christin Milloy	Mississauga-Brampton South, Ontario	House of Commons	2011
CHILE	Micheline Montreuil	Saint Sacrement, Quebec	Councillor	1993
	Zulia Gutiérrez Araya	Valparaíso	Councillor	★ 2012
	Felipe "Alejandra" González Pino	Lampa	Councillor	★ 2004, '08, '12
	Valentina Verbal	National	National Assembly	2013
COLOMBIA	Shelcy Sanchez	Valle del Cauca	National Assembly	2010
CUBA	Adela Hernandez	Caibarién	Councillor	★ 2012
DENMARK	Anette Egelund	Syddanmark	State Legislator	2008
ECUADOR	Diane Marie Rodriguez Zambrano	Guayas	National Assembly	2013
FRANCE	Camille Cabral	Paris	Councillor	★ 2012
	Pascale Ourbih	Paris	National Assembly	2008

☆ Upcoming Election

★ Elected (when out)

Appendix 2

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates

Country	Name	Place	Office	Election Date
GERMANY	Michaela Lindner	Quellendorf	Mayor	★ 1996
	Monika Strub	Baden-Württemberg	State Legislator	2011
INDIA	Shabnam Mausli Bano	Madya Pradesh	State Legislator	★ 1998
	T Bhavana	Bangalore	State Legislator	2014
	Chandni	Narasimharaja, Karnataka	State Legislator	2013
	Asha Devi	Gorakhpur	Mayor	★ 2000
	Bharathi Kannamma	Tamil Nadu	National Assembly	2014
	Daya Rani Kinnar	National	President	2011
	Kamala Kinnar	Uttar Pradesh	National Assembly	2014
	Madhu Kinnar	Chhattisgarh's Raigarh MC	Mayor	★ 2014
	Soumya	Gandhinagar, Karnataka	State Legislator	2013
ITALY	Martina Castellana	Salerno	State Legislator	★ 2009
	Marcella Di Folco	Bologna	Councillor	★ 1990, 1995
	Marcella Di Folco	Emilia-Romagna	National Assembly	2001
	Marcella Di Folco	Bologna	European Parliament	2004
	Marcella Di Folco	National	Senator	2006
	Valdimir Luxuria	Lazio 1	National Assembly	★ 2006
JAPAN	Aya Kamikawa	Tokyo	Councillor	★ 2003, '07, '11
MEXICO	Amaranta Gómez Regalado	3rd Circumscription	National Assembly	2003
NEW ZEALAND	Georgina Beyer	Carterton	Councillor	★ 1993
	Georgina Beyer	Carterton	Mayor	★ 1995, 1998
	Georgina Beyer	Wairarapa	National Assembly	★ 1999, 2002
	Georgina Beyer	National	National Assembly	★ 2005
	Georgina Beyer	Te Tai Tonga	National Assembly	2014
	Kelly Ellis	Whangarei	National Assembly	2014
	Jacquie Grant	Greymouth	Councillor	★ 1998, 2002
	Jacquie Grant	Westland	Mayor	2013
	Carmen Rupe	Wellington	Mayor	1977
	Carmen Rupe	Wellington	Councillor	1977
	Mama Tere Strickland	National	National Assembly	2005

☆ Upcoming Election

★ Elected (when out)

Appendix 2

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates

Country	Name	Place	Office	Election Date
PAKISTAN	Sanam Faqeer	Sukkur province	State Legislator	2013
	Lubna Lal	Punjab province	State Legislator	2013
	Bindiya Rana	Karachi province	State Legislator	2013
	Resham	Gujrat province	State Legislator	2013
PERU	Fulvia Celica Siguas Sandoval	Lima	Mayor	1998
	Luisa Revilla Urcia	La Esperanza, Trujillo	Councillor	★ 2014
PHILIPPINES	Bhuta Adelante	Manila	Councillor	★ 2015
	Benedito Bemz Aleeh	National	National Congress	2010, 2013
POLAND	Anna Grodzka		National Assembly	★ 2011
SPAIN	Carla Antonelli	Madrid	Councillor	★ 2011
	Carmen de Mairena	Catalan	State Legislator	2010
	Manuela Trasobares Haro	Geldo	Councillor	★ 2007
	Manuela Trasobares Haro	Castellón	National Assembly	2008
SWITZERLAND	Alecs Recher	Zurich Canton	Councillor	★ 2010
THAILAND	Choochat Dulayapraphatsorn	Tai Ban Mai	Mayor	★ 2008
	Yollada “Nok” Suanyot	Nan	State Legislator	★ 2012
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	Jowelle de Souza	San Fernando West	National Assembly	2015
TURKEY	Öykü Özen	Osmangazi	Councillor	2014
	Deva Ozenen	Izmir	National Assembly	2015
UNITED KINGDOM	Jenny Bailey	Cambridge	Councillor	★ 2002, '04, '06
	Jenny Bailey	Cambridge	Mayor	★ 2007
	Anna May Booth	Trafford	Councillor	2014
	Emily Brothers	Sutton and Cheam	House of Commons	2015
	Sarah Brown	Cambridge	Councillor	★ 2010
	Sarah Brown	Cambridge	Councillor	2014
	Stephanie Dearden	Tooting	House of Commons	2005
	Osh Gantly	Islington	Councillor	★ 2014
	Stella Gardiner	Bexleyhealth	House of Commons	2015
	Zoe Kirk-Robinson	Bolton	Councillor	2014
	Zoe Kirk-Robinson	Bolton	Councillor	★ 2015

☆ Upcoming Election

★ Elected (when out)

Appendix 2

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates

Country	Name	Place	Office	Election Date
UNITED KINGDOM	Charlie Kiss	Islington	Councillor	2014
	Charlie Kiss	Islington South	House of Commons	2015
	Jennifer Liddle	Cambridge	Councillor	★ 2000, '02, '04
	Alexandra (Sandra) MacRae	Glasgow Provan	House of Commons	1992
	Rosalind Mitchell	Bristol	Councillor	★ 1997
	Anwen Muston	Wolverhampton	Councillor	2014, 2015
	Zoe O'Connell	Cambridge	Councillor	2014
	Zoe O'Connell	Maldon	House of Commons	2015
	Zoe O'Connell	Cambridge	Councillor	★ 2015
	Mark Rees	Tunbridge Wells	Councillor	★ 1994
	Nikki Sinclair	West Midlands	European Parliament	★ 2009 (2013)
	Nikki Sinclair	West Midlands	European Parliament	2015
	Rachael Webb	Lambeth	Councillor	★ 1986, 1990
UNITED STATES	Amanda Ashley	Carrboro, North Carolina	Mayor	2009
	Kristin Beck	Maryland 5th	US House	2015
	Pam Bennett	Aurora, Colorado	Councillor	2007
	Dana Beyer	Maryland	State Senator	2012
	Michelle Bruce	Riverdale, Georgia	Councillor	★ 2003
	Joanne Marie Conte	Arvada, Colorado	Councillor	★ 1991
	Lizbeth DeSelm	Maryland	Melrose School Committee	☆ 2015
	Gina Duncan	Orange County, Florida	County Commission	2014
	Phyllis Frye	Houston, Texas	Judge – Appointed	★ 2010
	Jennifer Gale	Austin, Texas	Mayor	1997, '00, '01, '03, '06
	Jennifer Gale	Austin, Texas	School Board	1998, 2004
	Jennifer Gale	Austin, Texas	Councillor	1999, '02, '05, '08
	Jennifer Gale	Dallas, Texas	Mayor	2007
	Althea Garrison	Massachusetts	State Legislator	★ 1992 (1992)
	Althea Garrison	Massachusetts	State Legislator	'94, '96, '00, '06, '12, '14
	Althea Garrison	Boston, Massachusetts	Mayor	2001
	Althea Garrison	Massachusetts	State Senator	2002, 2008

☆ Upcoming Election

★ Elected (when out)

Appendix 2

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates

Country	Name	Place	Office	Election Date
UNITED STATES	Althea Garrison	Boston, Massachusetts	Councillor	'03, '05, '11, '13
	Althea Garrison	Massachusetts	State Legislator	2010
	Althea Garrison	Boston, Massachusetts	Councillor	☆ 2015
	Anita Green	Missoula, Montana	Councillor	☆ 2015
	Sophia Hawes	Salt Lake City, Utah	State Legislator	2014
	Sophie Hawes-Tingey	Midvale, Utah	Councillor	☆ 2015
	Christina Hayworth	New York	US Senator	2011
	Kim Coco Iwamoto	Hawaii	Board of Education	★ 2006, 2010
	Kim Coco Iwamoto	Hawaii	Civil Rights Commissioner – <i>Appointed</i>	★ 2012
	Hina Wong Kalu	Hawaii	OHA Trustee At-Large	2014
	Susan Kimberly	Ramsey, Minnesota	County Board	1994
	Karen Kiren	Montpelier, Vermont	State House	1994
	Karen Kiren	Vermont At-Large	US House	2000
	Karen Kirin	Vermont	State Attorney General	2010
	Jack Knoxville	Knoxville, Tennessee	Mayor	2015
	Victoria Kolakowski	Alameda County, California	Judge	★ 2010
	Stacie Laughton	New Hampshire	State Legislator – <i>Resigned</i>	★ 2012
	Kathryn Leigh McGuire	Houston, Texas	Councillor	1989
	Stephen “Stephanie” Meade	San Diego, California	US House	2014
	Gypsy Vered Meltzer	Appleton, Wisconsin	Councillor	★ 2014
	Donna Milo	Florida	US Congress Republican primary	2010
	Brittany Novotny	Oklahoma	State Legislator	2010
	Jessica Orsini	Centralia, Missouri	Councillor	★ 2006, '08, '10
	Paula Overby	Minnesota 2nd	US House – <i>Withdrew</i>	2014
	Jenifer Rene Pool	Houston, Texas	Councillor	2011, 2014
	Stu Rasmussen	Silverton, Oregon	Mayor	★ 2008, 2010
	Marisa Richmond	Tennessee	Democratic Party Executive Committee	★ 2008
	Melissa Sue Robinson	Lansing, Michigan	Mayor	2003
	Melissa Sue Robinson	Michigan	State House	2004, '06, '10

☆ Upcoming Election

★ Elected (when out)

Appendix 2

Transgender and Gender Variant Candidates

Country	Name	Place	Office	Election Date
UNITED STATES	Melissa Sue Robinson	Michigan	State Senator	2006
	Melissa Sue Robinson	Nampa, Idaho	Mayor	2009
	Joan Roughgarden	San Francisco, California	Board of Supervisors	2000
	Lauren Scott	Nevada	State Legislator	2014
	Amanda Simpson	Arizona	State Legislator	2004
	Melissa Sklarz	New York, New York	Democratic Committee	★ 1999
	Mark Ethan Smith	Coronado, California	Councillor	1998
	Larissa Sneider	Wyoming	State Legislator	2014
	Paula Sophia	Oklahoma	State Legislator	2014
	Theresa Sparks	San Francisco, California	Board of Supervisors	2010
	Jamie Rafaela Wolfe	San Francisco, California	School Board	2010, 2014
	Mel Wymore	New York, New York	Councillor	2012
URUGUAY	Michelle Suárez Bértora	National	Senator – Substitute	★ 2014
VENEZUELA	Tamara Adrián	National	Supreme Court	2010
	Tamara Adrián	Caracus	National Assembly	☆ 2015

Sources: In compiling the data, we drew on a variety of sources, seeking to confirm information from multiple avenues. We have only included individuals who self-identify as transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming. We are particularly indebted to Zagria whose blog, A Gender Variance Who's Who, is an important resource (zagria.blogspot.com). Detailed sources are available from the Initiative on request.

☆ Upcoming Election

★ Elected (when out)

LGBTQ Representation and Rights

The UNC LGBTQ Representation and Rights Research Initiative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the first academic program in the United States focused exclusively on the link between the representation of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people and the legal and political rights afforded to those groups.

The mission is threefold:

- 1 Conduct and encourage research on the relationship between the presence and representation of LGBTQ individuals and equality.
- 2 Nurture, connect, and inspire a cohort of scholars focused on questions of sexual orientation, representation, and rights in North Carolina and beyond.
- 3 Pay testimony to and build on the Carolina tradition of pursuing engaged research, bringing the highest level of scholarship to bear on the question of how to protect and enhance equality, democracy, and the civil rights of all Americans.

The Initiative will:

Gather data to generate knowledge and evidence to support advocacy and generate understanding. Specifically, data on the representation of LGBTQ officials in national parliaments, multi-national assemblies, governments, and as mayors of cities. We are compiling a comprehensive compendium of national laws as they relate to the rights of LGB, Trans, and Queer communities.

lgbtqrepresentationandrights.org

Previous publications:



Out in Office: LGBT Legislators and LGBT Rights Around the World (Andrew Reynolds)



LGBT Rights and Representation in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Influence of Structure, Movements, Institutions, and Culture (Javier Corrales)

Forthcoming publication:

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Legislators and the Introduction of Same-Sex Marriage Laws in the United States (Andrew Reynolds and Alissandra T. Stoyan)



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